

Apparatus for Playing a Game and Method of Use thereof

The present invention relates to apparatus for playing a game and a method of use thereof.

There exists a large range of board games currently on the market. Many of these games include a play surface or play base on which one or more user's or players endeavour to get their play piece or marker from a start point to an end point before any of the other players. A number of squares or playing positions are provided between the start and end points and each player typically has to move between the squares or playing positions on their journey between the start and end points. A plurality of possible obstacles, actions and/or events can take place on this journey to add greater interest to the user. A common feature of these games is that in order for a user to move between play positions or identify a particular action or question which they have to undertake or answer, the user either moves through the play positions sequentially or throws dice to determine the number of play positions the user can move over.

A problem with these games is that they often follow a similar theme, are predictable and can be of only limited interest to the user, particularly when the user is a child.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide apparatus for playing a game and a method of use thereof which provides greater interest and intrigue to a user.

According to a first aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from at least a part of said play base and movable relative thereto, the movement or at least the result of

the movement of said at least first member relating to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing further playing of the game according to a set of rules.

The first member is typically suspended above the upper surface of the play base and movement of said member provides the user or users of the game with greater interest and provides unpredictability compared to conventional board games, such as games which rely on the throwing of dice to allow progress of the game.

Whilst the following description refers to advantages of the present invention over conventional games, such as board games requiring the use of dice, it will be appreciated by persons skilled in the art that the game apparatus according to the present invention can include in addition to the at least one movable member, any other conventional game components, such as dice.

Preferably the apparatus includes a frame and the at least first member is typically suspended from the frame. Thus, the first member is not required to be directly attached to the play base, thereby allowing free and substantially random movement of the member relative to the play base.

Further preferably the member is pivotally mounted on the frame to allow movement relative to said frame and/or play base in use.

In one embodiment the frame is mounted on the play base. The frame can be integrally formed with the play base or detachably attached thereto, thereby allowing easy dismantling of the game for storage and/or transport. In addition, the frame can include two or more interconnected arm members or two or more

substantially upright arm members between which a further member is supported. In one example, the further member is a plate like member.

The at least first member can include any or any combination of a toy, weight or pendulum.

Preferably the at least first member is provided with magnetic means which interacts with one or more further magnetic means provided on or associated with the play base and/or frame.

The term magnetic means includes any of a magnet, magnetic material or material attracted or repulsed by a magnet or magnetic material.

Preferably the at least first member includes an elongate portion having a first end attached to the frame and a second free end provided with the magnetic means, such as for example attached to, provided in or on a weight, pendulum or toy including magnetic means. The magnetic means is freely rotatable relative to an outer or upper surface of the play base.

The base of the magnetic means is typically located a pre-determined distance apart from the upper surface of the play base.

The elongate portion can be substantially flexible or substantially rigid but in a preferred embodiment the elongate portion is in the form of a flexible string or cord.

The pre-determined distance from which the magnetic means of the first member is spaced from the play base is determined such that interaction between the magnetic fields of the respective magnets is provided whilst allowing free rotation of the

weight/toy above the play base without obstruction from the play base.

The magnetic means of the play base can be located under an upper surface of the play base or can be provided in one or more housings or compartments on the play base.

Preferably the play base magnetic means are provided within the area defined by the frame.

Preferably the polarities of the magnetic means of the play base and first member are such so as to allow either repulsion and/or attraction therebetween.

In one embodiment a plurality of magnets are provided at spaced apart intervals in association with the play base. The movement of the at least first member is determined, at least in part, by the polarities of the magnetic means on the play base and first member.

Movement of the first member can be initiated by the user or automatically by mechanical or electronic means and, once initiated, the magnetic interaction of the respective magnetic means determines any or any combination of the speed, direction and/or degree of further movement of the first member.

Preferably the polarities of the magnets on the play base are different (i.e. both positive and negative polarity magnets are provided), thereby resulting in the first member moving in what appears to be an erratic manner as it encounters magnetic fields of different or the same polarity. The first member will typically eventually come to rest at a particular position after movement. This position may be adjacent a play base magnet/magnetic

means of opposite polarity to the first member or a position remote from or neutral relative to the interaction of the magnetic fields of the play base magnets.

In a preferred embodiment, the first member is provided with at least one magnet of positive polarity and the play base has, in one example, five magnets of negative polarity and three magnets of positive polarity.

A compartment is typically provided in, on or adjacent the play base to house the one or more further magnets therein. Since the user is unable to see the magnets, the movement of the at least first member relative to the play base appears to be by magic. The intrigue of the game is further enhanced since the at least first member may come to rest at an acute angle to the vertical and the means by which this can occur will not be immediately apparent to the user.

Preferably the one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing playing of the game are associated with one or more of said play base magnetic means.

Preferably the play base is provided with a plurality of play positions thereon which a user is required to move between using a play piece or via which a user can select a play piece, thereby resulting in a particular event or events being undertaken or question(s) being asked.

In one embodiment the user or users are required to move a play piece between a start point and an end point via the play positions in order to play the game.

In one embodiment the one or more further magnets are associated with one or more of the plurality of play positions.

In an alternative embodiment the play positions are located outside the area defined by the frame.

Preferably the portion of the playbase or compartment housing the further one or more magnets is movable relative to the remainder of the playbase by chance, user choice or by design. As such, the game does not become predictable as a result of the at least first member coming to rest at or adjacent the same play positions in use.

For example, the portion or compartment of the playbase housing the one or more further magnets can be rotatably mounted on the play base

In one embodiment the one or more further magnets are arranged around the circumference of a circle. The size of the circle and the distance between the magnets and the end of the at least first member typically depends on any or any combination of the power, polarity or gauss of the magnets. However, it will be appreciated that the magnets can be arranged in any required configuration.

The toy or weight can be provided in any required shape or design as required. For example, the toy can be in the form of a cartoon character, person, action hero, inanimate object and/or the like.

The play positions can be defined by any or any combination of images, shapes, text, symbol, photograph or data. For example, a number can be associated with each magnet provided on the play base and, when the first member comes to rest adjacent a particular magnet, the number associated with the magnet determines the number of play positions which a user can move

a play piece between. Thus, the degree of movement by which a user can move a play piece or select a play piece is determined, at least in part, by the movement of the first member relative to the play base.

According to a second aspect of the present invention there is provided a method of using apparatus to play a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from said play base, said method including the steps of a user moving said at least first member relative to said play base, the movement or at least the result of the movement of said at least first member relating to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing further playing of the game by the user or one or more further users according to a set of rules.

According to a yet further aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base and at least a first member located a pre-determined spaced distance apart from at least a part of said play base, one or more playing positions identified on said play base and one or more playing pieces for movement between said playing positions, and wherein the movement of the at least first member relates to one or more pre-determined criteria for allowing movement of the one or more playing pieces between the playing positions according to a set of rules.

According to a further aspect of the present invention there is provided apparatus for playing a game, said apparatus including a play base having first magnetic means located a pre-determined distance apart from at least a part of said play base and movable relative thereto, said play base having further magnetic means associated therewith and the magnetic interaction of said first and further magnetic means determining

the movement of the first magnetic means relative to the play base surface.

Embodiments of the present invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying figures, wherein:

Figure 1 is an example of game apparatus according to an embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a detailed illustration showing the arrangements of magnets in a play base of the game apparatus in one example with the upper surface of the play surface removed;

Figure 3 is a detailed view of the frame and pendulum connection according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 is a view of the frame and pendulum connection according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 is a detailed view of a toy pendulum in one embodiment of the present invention; and

Figure 6 illustrates an example of the game apparatus according to an alternative embodiment of the present invention.

Referring firstly to figure 1, there is illustrated apparatus 2 for playing a game according to one embodiment of the present invention. The apparatus 2 includes a play surface 4, a frame 6 attached to play surface 4, a first movable member in the form of a pendulum 8 attached to frame 6 and one or more play pieces 10 for moving across the play surface.

Frame 6 includes four arm members 18, each having a first end 19 located at spaced apart intervals on play surface 4 and a second end 20 located above first end 19. The second ends 20 of arm members 18 are joined together.

Pendulum 8 is suspended from a point 21 adjacent ends 20 of arm members 18 and comprises a length of flexible string 22 with a weight 24 attached to free end 26 thereof. The pendulum 8 is positioned such that a gap exists between the bottom 28 of weight 24 and the upper surface 30 of the play surface, thereby allowing weight 24 to freely pivot about point 21 without contact being made between weight 24 and surface 30.

In accordance with the present invention a portion 12 of the play surface is provided with a compartment 14 under which a plurality of magnets 16 are located (illustrated by dotted lines in figure 1), as shown in figure 2. The magnets 16 are arranged at spaced apart locations adjacent the peripheral edge of compartment 14. The polarity of magnets 16 are alternately arranged such that a positive pole magnet 16' has a negative pole magnet 16'' adjacent either side thereof and vice versa.

Weight 24 includes a magnet 32 therein with a positive pole adjacent end 28. When the pendulum 8 is swung by a user, the positive pole magnet 32 interacts with the magnetic fields generated by magnets 16. Since the positive pole magnet 32 of weight 24 is attracted to negative pole magnets 16'' and repulsed by positive pole magnets 16' in compartment 14, the pendulum 8 appears to swing erratically across portion 12 of play surface 4. The pendulum eventually comes to rest adjacent a negative pole magnet 16'. Since the magnets 16 are hidden in compartment 14 and the user is therefore unaware of the magnets and the respective polarities, the pendulum appears to swing in an entirely random manner and appears to stop as if by magic in a

position wherein the string and/or weight are, in one example, at an acute angle to the vertical relative to the axis of rotation about the pivot point 21. Since the user would typically expect the pendulum to come to rest at a centre of portion 12 with the string in a vertical orientation, the angled position of the pendulum at rest is of increased interest to the user and adds to the intrigue of the game.

The weight 24 will typically have the potential to come to rest adjacent any of negative magnets 16' depending on the direction, size and angle of the force applied by the user to initially swing the pendulum. Although the magnets 16 are arranged around the circumference of a circular portion 12, it will be appreciated that the magnets can be located in any required arrangement, such as around the perimeter of a square or other shape, or spaced at any required location therewithin. In addition, the distance between adjacent magnets 16, the size of the gap between end 28 of weight 24 and the size of portion 12 can be varied as required and is typically dependent on the power and/or gauss of the magnets.

The upper surface of play surface 4 can be provided with one or more images, shapes, text, photograph, symbol or data thereon which correspond to possible play positions 34 between which play pieces 10 can be moved by one or more users according to rules for playing the game. These play positions can be provided on portion 12 corresponding approximately to positions of magnets 16, such that the resting position of pendulum 8 is adjacent a play position. In this arrangement, the resting position of the pendulum adjacent a particular play position can provide an indication to the user, for example, to undertake a particular action, to move their play piece 10 in a particular manner and/or the like. Alternatively, or in addition to, one or

more play positions can be provided adjacent portion 12 at spaced locations on the remainder of play surface 4.

In order that the mechanism does not become predictable, portion 12 can be moved relative to the remainder of play surface 4, such that play positions 34 are not always adjacent the same polarity magnets. For example, portion 12 can be rotated relative to the remainder upper surface of the play surface 4. Portion 12 can be provided in a recess of play surface 4 and removable therefrom, can be integrally formed with the play surface and/or can simply sit in a pre-determined or marked out position on the upper surface of the play surface.

The ends 19 of arm members 18 can be detachably attached to the play surface 4. The resulting frame formed from arm members 18 can be balanced on play surface 4 or can be attached thereto by one or more clips, adhesive, VELCRO, screws, friction fit and/or the like.

Ends 20 of arm members 18 can be slotted into a number of channels 35 defined in a pivot member 36. String 22 of pendulum 8 is typically attached to end 38 of pivot member 36 to form pivot point 21, as shown in figure 3.

In an alternative embodiment, frame 106 includes four substantially upright arm members 108, each located at four corners of a plate member 110, as shown in figure 4. Arm members 108 are each provided with a slot 112 therein for receiving a corner 114 of plate member 110 and supporting the same in use. A pendulum 116 is attached by string 118 at pivot point 120 on plate member 110. Pendulum 116 is freely rotatable about pivot point 120 as in figure 3.

The pendulum can be provided in any required design and can include any type of flexible or substantially rigid elongate member joined to a pivot point, such as a cord, string, or arm member formed from plastic, wood, board and/or metal. The toy or weight 24 can be provided in any required design and can be formed from magnetic material or have one or more magnets located therewith.

In the example in figure 5, a figure of an action hero, such as Spiderman, is provided as toy 202 at the free end of pendulum arm member 204. The upper play surface 206 can be provided with a plurality of designs 208 representing numbers thereon. The position of these numbers typically corresponds to the position of a plurality of magnets. In this arrangement, the resting position of the pendulum adjacent a particular number, typically corresponds to a number on a dice thrown during a conventional game, thereby representing a number of play positions between which the user is required to move their play piece on the play surface and/or the like. The remainder of the play surface 210 can be provided with a plurality of play positions 212 which represent a journey which one or more users have to move one or more play pieces along between a start point and an end point, as shown in figure 6. The user reaching the end point of the game before any other user is typically the winner of the game.

It will be appreciated that the number, size and/or design of play pieces 10 and/or play positions 34 can be varied as required and can form a game when played in accordance with a pre-determined set of rules. The present invention is not limited to the rules of the game or the type or number of play pieces but is directed to the use of a pendulum, the movement of which can be used in conjunction with other game pieces or game rules to provide a game.